

THE 3
COUNTRY GENTLEMAN'S
A D V I C E
TO HIS
NEIGHBOURS.

THE ELEVENTH EDITION.

BY E. W. ESQ.

L O N D O N:

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My good Friends and Neighbours,

BEING desirous, during my necessary Absence from ***, to give You some Token of my Remembrance, some Proof that my Heart is with You, I thought I could not do it better, than in sending You my Opinion and Advice, upon Those Things wherein Your Interest is concerned.

I am persuaded that none of You can have any Doubt of my Inclination to promote it upon all Occasions, and hope I have not passed my Time so unfruitfully amongst You, as that You should

be at a Loss to know in what I think it chiefly consists.

If I could suggest to You any Method of improving Your Worldly Substance, and adding to your Wealth consistently with good Conscience, I would by no Means be silent upon that Head; but my present Address to You has Objects of another, and infinitely more valuable Kind in view.

It is very true, and I acknowledge it with Pleasure, that you have able and religious Teachers in Your several Parishes, and that You hear from them once every Week, that You have *a Soul to be saved*, and by what Means it is to be *saved*.

Yet I hope none of you are so destitute of true *saving* Knowledge, as to think, that Religion is the Business of Your *Sundays* only; or that the great Concern of Eternity deserves no more than a Seventh Part of Your present Time.

As You cannot be so great Enemies to Your own Welfare, as to think thus narrowly of Religion, You ought, and I doubt not will, esteem that Man Your Friend,

Friend, who endeavours to bring it home to You, by informing Your Understanding, or at least refreshing Your Memory concerning the real Duties of it, in order to make it a frequent Object of Your Reflexions in Your Houses, in the Field, in the Markets, as well as in the Churches.

I do not say that You should think of nothing Else but Religion : *for then* (as St. Paul says upon another Occasion) *must Ye needs go out of the World.* But this I say, that You should so accustom Your Minds to the Desire, and Design of pleasing God in all Things, that You should, even by Habit, make *That* the Standard of every Thought, every Word, and every Action.

And do not imagine that my applying myself to You upon this Subject is owing to any Apprehension that You have more Occasion for such Exhortations than Others : I can assure You most sincerely, that it is not ; for I can say with Truth, that I have found You in General a Sober, Peaceable and Un-corrupted People. But it is declared by an Apostle, that *in many Things We of-*

send all, and there is surely None so very good, but that they may receive Benefit from mutual Admonitions.

You are certainly happy in being at such a Distance from any of those great Sinks of Iniquity, where Ingratitude, and Disrespect to Our greatest Benefactor, is fashionable, and Neglect of our immortal Souls an Accomplishment. You may thank God that the Contagion has not yet reached You.

It is a melancholy Thing to consider, that Thousands of Those who acknowledge their Expectation of a Future State, and of those Rewards and Punishments which God hath appointed, will not yet take so much Pains, nor exercise so much Self-denial for the obtaining the One, and avoiding the other, tho' believed Eternal, as they do for procuring to themselves the Enjoyment of some Momentary Pleasure, perhaps a Vicious one, or for the escaping some Bodily Distemper, or other Temporary Evil.

You cannot but be sensible of the Perverseness and Absurdity of such a Conduct, and it will need no Reasoning to convince You, that the true Standard,

dard, and Computation of Happiness and Unhappiness, is the Length, or Shortness of their Duration.

Let me advise You to make this Comparison the Subject of your frequent Meditation. You are, and justly, anxious about the Fruit and Product of Your worldly Care and Labour; endeavour to raise in Your Minds the same Solicitude about the Consequences of all Your other Actions, remembering that the Profit, or Loss, is Eternal.

I do not propose to enter here into a particular Description of every Point of Christian Duty. I should pay a very ill Compliment, as well to Your worthy Ministers, as to Yourself, in supposing You to want Instruction therein. I would rather excite You to the Practice of what You already know, than pretend to teach You any Thing that You do not.

You know as well as I, or any Man can tell You, What it is to be Honest, and Sober, and Chaste, and Humble, and Meek; You know what is Good Nature, and Truth, and Piety; You are acquainted too, Who it is that expects

these Things from You ; and what You have to hope, or to fear, from Him.

With this Knowledge, is it possible to be Unconcerned and Indifferent ? When Your Thoughts and Words, and Actions here, have such a Connection with Eternity, Can You take a Step in this World, which will not put You in Mind of the Next ?

Yet tho' I do not propose to enumerate, and inforce to You every Precept of God's Moral Law, there are two or three Points which I cannot help mentioning more particularly.

The First is what relates to the Indulgence of what we justly call unlawful Love, as being expressly forbidden by the Gospel, tho' treated by many, in this enlightened Age, and Country, as a slight Offence : and there are some, who will talk of their own Transgressions against this Divine Law, without Remorse ; and even boast of their diabolical Conquests over Innocence, and Virtue.

Against this Crime therefore, I would endeavour in an especial Manner, to arm your Minds, because there is more
than

than ordinary Danger from Without, as well as from Within ; from the Suggestions of profligate Companions backed and abetted by those of inward Passion.

But consider, or, if You have no Occasion Yourself for such Consideration, make the young People for whom You may be concerned, as a Father, or Master, consider that he who corrupts a Woman, is guilty of a vile Dishonesty ; that he robs some Husband of the Property which God has allotted him, and of the Peace and Happiness of his Life ; that he brings Discredit, and Grief upon some Father, Mother, or other Relations ; that he gives Birth perhaps to an Infant, whose Innocence will not protect Him from the Reproaches of his Parent's Infamy ; that he strips and plunders a Fellow Creature of that Virtue, which should support her in this World, and in the next ; that he is very probably the Occasion of Distress and Misery to the Partner of his Shame ; and very probably too, of her being driven by that Distress, to an abandoned Prostitution ; And what else can he ex-

pect

pect at the Hands of the Righteous Judge, but to be called to answer, in the last Day, for the Soul which he has destroyed, and to take his Share in the Punishment of every Sin, of which he has been the Occasion?

But perhaps, he is not the Corrupter, he only follows in the Track of Vice began by another: Is he therefore innocent? Will He that receives the stolen Goods, be allowed to plead that he did not steal Them? Let this Wise Distinguisher bring forth his Reasons; Let him see if he can justify, before his Maker and his Judge, the comforting, abetting and encouraging a Fellow Subject in Rebellion against Him; the paying the Price of Sin by hiring another to commit it; and the preventing, as much as in him lies, the Return of a Guilty Soul to God.

When You reflect upon these Things, You will see very plainly the Reason, why St. *Paul* has so positively declared, that * no Adulterer, nor Fornicator shall enter into the Kingdom of God. And
I hope

* 1 Cor. vi. 9.

I hope Your Reflexion thereupon will be sufficient to keep you clear from those Great Offences.

But perhaps some may think, that if they keep to one Woman only, living with her in all Respects as a Husband with a Wife, the Matrimonial Ceremony may be safely omitted, as a mere human Institution. But let such ask their own Consciences, whether their secret Reason for omitting that Ceremony, be not, that They may have the Liberty of separating Themselves, at their Pleasure, from the Woman, whom they pretend to regard as a Wife; And, if that be the Case, let them not represent that Conduct as conformable to the Law of God, which is founded upon a Reservation to themselves of a Power to break it, whenever they shall be weary of complying with it.

But these Irregularities are, I hope, very rare amongst Us.

The Thing which I shall next mention to You, and desire to caution You against, is *Gaming*, which is of late, to the great Grief of all good Men, crept into several Towns in Your Neighbourhood.

hood. Consider this only in the Light of Worldly Prudence, can You think it reasonable to hazard what You have earn'd with the Sweat of your Brow, by long Labour, and Care, upon the Chance of a Moment, and to hazard it perhaps against Those, whose Profession is Knavery, and who have no other Subsistence but what arises from the Plunder of your unguarded Simplicity? Or can You expect Honesty, and a faithful Management of your Concerns from your Sons, and Servants, if You suffer them to expose themselves to so great a Temptation?

Look upon this Practice in a Religious View, can there be a greater Immorality than to stake the Maintenance of your Wife, and Children, upon the Cast of a Dye, or Turn of a Card; to play for the future Happiness of Yourself, or Neighbour; and to put Yourself voluntarily into a Situation, where You must either ruin, or be ruined; and where, if You have any Pleasure, it must arise from the Grief and Misery of your Fellow Christian?

If

If there be *Drunkenness* amongst You, if there be *Swearing* and *Obscene Talking*, if *Pilfering* amongst the poorer Sort, especially from their Benefactors, and any Species of *Dishonesty* and *Fraud*, with Regard to Buying, Selling, Paying of Rent, Tythes, Taxes, or any other Matter, amongst the more Substantial; I have the Pleasure of thinking that they are not very commonly practiced in our Country, and shall therefore content myself with exhorting Those unhappy People, whose Consciences may accuse them of any such Transgressions, to remember, before it is too late, that *for all these Things, God shall bring them to Judgment.*

If these Reflections make the Impression they ought upon You, and You are desirous to know more perfectly, *What You should do to be saved*, the best Advice which I can give You, is, to seek for the Law of God, in the Book of God, and to compare Your Behaviour with the Rules laid down in the Gospel.

You will see there what Sort of Obedience is required by our Lord and Saviour, to make us worthy Members of
his

his Kingdom ; that it must be a Compliance, not with This, or That, but with all his Commands ; That it must proceed from a purified Heart, purified, as much as possible in this Carnal State, from all secret Approbation of Sin,—and from a sincere Desire of pleasing God.

You will see too, that the promoting this Glory of God, this Universal Obedience of his Creatures to him, was of so great Consequence, that it was the Cause, why * *all Scripture was given*, and one of the great Objects even of the Death of Christ.

And You will observe that, amongst all those Commandments of God, what is chiefly insisted on, as the *New*, the *Royal*, and the most important *Law*, is *Charity*, which I chuse to mention particularly to You, that You may not understand it in that Narrow and Limited Sense only, to which our Language commonly applies it ; I mean the giving Alms to the Poor, (That being in Truth but one Branch of it) But may know, that when you are ordered to be *Charitable*,

* 2 Tim. iii. 17.

Tit. ii. 14.

ritable, You are ordered to bear sincere Good-Will to all Men, of all Denominations, of all Countries, of all Sects, and Parties; looking upon them without Distinction, as your *Neighbours*, forgiving Offences, justifying Characters, discouraging Scandal, reconciling Differences, and seeking all Opportunities to promote the Welfare, both Temporal and Eternal, of all, with whom You have any Connection.

Lastly, You will see with Joy and Gratitude, that to him who thus sincerely obeys God, delighting in the Performance of his Will, and preferring his Approbation to all other Things whatsoever, *Exceeding great and precious Promises* are made, and that even Everlasting Happiness, *an eternal Weight of Glory*, (as it is stiled by *St. Paul*) is reserved for Those, who shall come off Conquerors in this Contention with the World, with Themselves, and with the great Adversary of God, and Man; Not however, as due to the Merit of our own imperfect Performances, but from the free Gift and Bounty of God, in Consideration of the Death and Sacrifice of Our
blessed

bleſſed Saviour, the only begotten Son of God, who died upon the Croſs for our Sins, and gave his Life, as he has himſelf declared, * *a Ransom for Many.*

Now this being the Caſe, You will not wonder to find that Faith in this great Author of our Salvation, (*viz.*) A firm Reliance upon the Promiſes of God thro' him, ſhould be likewise required of Us, and that as *Abraham's* Dependance upon the Power and Veracity of God, firſt to give him a Son, and then to raiſe that Son from the Dead, both contrary to the common Courſe of Nature, was reckon'd to him for Righteouſneſs ; So We too, ſhould be required to give Credit (if I may ſo ſay) to Almighty God, for the Means of our Reſtoration, and Reconciliation to him, tho' incomprehenſible to Us ; and to accept of Happineſs in the Way, wherein he is pleaſed to offer it. For if you will † *count the Blood of the Covenant an unholy Thing*, how can you be *ſanctified* by it ? If You reject the Sacrifice, What Share can You have in the Atonement ?

When

* Matt. xx. 28. Mark, x. 45. † Heb. x. 29.

When You have fully consider'd and ponder'd in Your Hearts this great and wonderful Instance of the Mercy, and Love of God, and have added to it all the other innumerable Blessings, for which we are all indebted to his Gracious Providence, You will hardly want the Assistance even of Scripture, to teach You, that he is to be reciprocally loved, by his Creatures, and constantly worshipped by Them, (*viz.*) adored and praised with humble Thanksgiving in Publick and in Private, for his infinite Goodness, and intreated with the devoutest Prayers to continue it to Us. If You judge rightly of Yourself and of Him, You will think it your highest Privilege and Honour, and Comfort to have this Access to him thro' Christ, and will omit no Opportunity of testifying your Gratitude, acknowledging your Dependance, and proclaiming your Trust in him; and more particularly, if you find any peculiar Method instituted by our great Redeemer for our perpetual Commemoration of what he did, and suffered for Us, (as You will find such a One in the Sacrament of the
Lord's

Lord's Supper) You will not be diverted by any trivial and unworthy Pretences from appearing constantly *there*, to declare Your Subjection, to avow Your Obligations, and to renew Your Engagements, in the Face of the Congregation, to this most High, most powerful, and most Beneficent Saviour.

But if, upon thus searching the Scriptures, as I have before advised You, in order to learn the Will of God, You should be terrified with the long Catalogue of Duties, and with the Penalties under which they are enacted ; If, upon comparing the Task to be performed with Your own Strength to perform it, Your Heart should faint within You, so that You should be ready to cry out, *Who is equal to these Things?* The same Scripture will give You Comfort herein also, for it will teach You that We are not as formerly, under the rigid Covenant, either of the Adamical, or Moisaical Law, where every Transgression was Fatal, and no Supernatural Assistance promised ; But that the same Merciful Lawgiver, who has assigned everlasting Rewards to *Obedience*, has given
Us

Us by the Gospel Covenant his Holy Spirit to aid Us in *Obeying*, to direct Us in the Way, and strengthen Us in the Pursuit of eternal Glory. This is that Spirit of God, that Advocate or Comforter, whom Our Saviour promised to all Believers, the Spirit which both raised him from the Dead, and who will raise Us too, if We concur with his holy Motions, first from the Death of Sin, and, in God's due Time, from the Death of Nature also.

But this is not all: The Mercy of God does not stop here neither. Christianity is not more a Law of Faith, and of Practice, than it is a Proclamation of Pardon. This is the *Good News* which our Saviour himself came to tell Us, and which he ordered his Disciples to carry into all Parts of the World—the Doctrine of *Repentance unto Life*.

And besides all this, We have a merciful constant Intercessor, in our Behalf, at the Right Hand of God, the same who created Us, who died for Us, and who will hereafter judge Us. *If any Man Sin*, says St. John, *We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the*

the Righteous, and He is the Propitiation for our Sins.

If any one therefore has been so unhappy as to spend some Part of his Life in Disobedience, or if the Course of his Duty be sometimes interrupted by sudden Effects of Surprize and human Passion, Let him not therefore despair of Mercy, but endeavour sincerely to qualify himself for it, by Complying with the Terms of the Gospel, I mean, by a true and unfeigned Repentance, which consists in the Sorrow and Shame of having Offended; in a Change of the Mind, and Disposition, from Evil to Good; in a total abandoning of all those Things wherein We have Sinned; and in turning with the whole Heart unto God; humbly imploring Pardon of what is past, for his Sake, who died to obtain that Pardon for Us; and begging the Assistance of His Holy Spirit to secure Us from future Miscarriages.

If any Man be dissatisfied with this Sketch of Christian Duty and Christian Faith—If he would direct You to other Mediators between God and Man, besides the Man Christ Jesus—If he would
teach

teach You new, and different Methods of obtaining Reconciliation, and Pardon—If he would have You think meanly of moral Virtue, as of no Value in the Sight of God, and persuade You, Contrary to the exprefs Declaration of St. *John*, that * *He that doeth Righteousness is not Righteous* ; but multiplying, and magnifying the Terms of our Salvation, beyond what our Saviour, and his Apostles taught, and requiring Angelical Perfection of Mortal Man.—Or, if he would make You believe that the Spirit of God does not only assist, and strengthen Us in our Course, but does in Effect run it in our stead, being the sole Doer of all our good Deeds, and Performer of all our Obedience ; leaving thereby no real Choice of Good and Evil in Man, and Consequently neither Room for present Trial, nor Equity in Future Judgment—And if he tells You that the Operations of this same Spirit must be felt, and distinguished within You, perplexing your Minds with subtle Questions of Man's Wisdom,

* Eph. iii. 7.

Wisdom, about Grace and Regeneration, and Experiences, and Instantaneous Conversions—I he best Advice that I can give You in such a Case, is, to require a Proof of such Teachers as These, that they are not wise *above what is written*, by calling on them to shew You their Doctrines *plainly* contained in the Word of God. And let not any one impose upon your Simplicity by the Use of hard unscriptoral Terms, or by long and difficult Inferences pretended to be deduced from Thence, for You may be assured, that what is not there clearly expressed, and does not lie open to your Comprehension, can be no Law to You, since it is impossible that God should impose any Law upon his Creatures, and make the Terms of it at the same Time unintelligible to Them; and little less than Blasphemy to suppose, that the Righteous Judge should try Us by a Rule, which he has not given Us Capacities either to find out or to understand.

If indeed any Person imagines, that by superior Degrees of Knowledge, acquired by the immediate Impulse and
Illumi-

Illumination of the Spirit (which some lay Claim to) he has discovered new and more exalted Rules of Christian *Duty*, with Respect either to Belief or Practice, They may in Truth become obligatory upon Him, to whom they should thus appear in the Light of *Duties*. But let not that Man pretend to impose his Persuasions upon the Consciences of others, till he can produce his Credentials from God to preach a different Gospel from that which you have received; Or, in other Words, till he can give you that Proof of his particular Inspiration which You have a Right to require by Working Miracles, as our Saviour, and his Apostles did.

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